

REMARKS

Applicants request favorable reconsideration of this application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks. Of claims 1-14 that are pending in the application, claims 6, 7, 13, and 14 were withdrawn and claims 1-5 and 8-12 were rejected in the Office Action. By way of this amendment, Applicants have: (a) amended examined claims 1-4 and withdrawn claim 6; (b) cancelled claims 5 and 12, without prejudice or disclaimer; and (c) added new claims 15-22. Accordingly, claims 1-4, 8-11, and 15-22 are respectfully presented for further consideration on the merits.

1. Rejection of Claims 1-5 and 8-12 Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶ 2

The Examiner rejected claims 1-5 and 8-12 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶ 2 as allegedly being indefinite due to allegedly objectionable language in claims 1, 2, and 5. Preliminarily, this rejection is now moot with respect to claims 5 and 12, which have been canceled herein, without prejudice or disclaimer. In addition, Applicants respectfully submit that this rejection is also now moot with respect to claims 1-4 and 8-11, due to the amendments made herein to claims 1 and 2. Accordingly, a withdrawal of this rejection is both warranted and earnestly solicited.

2. Rejection of Claims 1-5 and 8-12 Under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(b), 103(a)

The Examiner rejected: (a) claims 1-5 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,125,685 (“Takahashi”); and (b) claims 8-12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being obvious when considering Takahashi in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,229,544 (“Horiuchi”). Preliminarily, these rejections are now moot with respect to claims 5 and 12, which have been canceled herein, without prejudice or disclaimer. Correspondingly, these rejections will be addressed and respectfully traversed with respect to claims 1-4 and 8-11.

As amended herein, claim 1 (*i.e.*, the claim from which claims 1-4 and 8-11 depend) recites a harness slack take-up structure for taking-up a slack of a harness extended from a steering wheel. This harness slack take-up structure includes, among other possible things (*italic emphasis added*):

- a steering shaft to which the steering wheel is fixed;
- a steering column that is configured to rotatably accommodate the steering shaft and that is configured to slide together with the steering shaft in a front/rear direction, wherein the harness extends from the steering wheel along the steering column, and

wherein the slack of the harness has a first end and a second end;
a slack holder configured to contain the slack of the harness;
a movable part that is movable in the slack holder, and that is configured to slide with the steering column in the front-rear direction; and
a fixed part fixed to the slack holder,
wherein the first end of the slack engages a member of the movable part and the second end of the slack engages the fixed part, and
*wherein the fixed part has an unimpeded line of sight to at least a portion of the movable part when the movable portion moves between an extreme frontward position and an extreme rearward position, and
wherein the fixed part and the member of the movable part continuously have the slack of the harness therebetween when the movable part moves between the extreme frontward position and the extreme rearward position.*

For at least the following reasons, Takahashi and Horiuchi (standing alone or combined) fail to teach or suggest such a harness slack take-up structure.

As shown in the embodiment of the instant invention depicted in application Figure 5, the movable part 24 includes a member (*i.e.*, cylindrical effector 29) that engages a first end of the slack 32 of the harness 31. A second end of the slack 32 engages a fixed part 26. In this configuration, when the movable part moves between extreme rearward and forward positions (*i.e.*, between the rearward and forward ends of the guide hole 23), the slack 32 is continuously between the member (*i.e.*, cylindrical effector 29) of the movable part 24 and the fixed part 26. This novel feature of the present invention is above-italicized in claim 1.

Figure 3 of Takahashi teaches a movable part 10 that includes two members (*i.e.*, cylindrical strut 13 and guide post 15) that engage a first end of a slack of a harness. Further, Takahashi teaches two fixed parts (*i.e.* partition 24 and fixed holder 11) that also engage the slack. However, in contrast to the above-italicized limitations of claim 1, when the movable part 10 moves between extreme forward and rearward positions in the guide grooves 23: (a) the slack is not continuously between either of the members 13, 15 of the movable part 10 and the first fixed part 24; and (b) although the slack is continuously between the both of the members 13, 15 of the movable part and the second fixed part 11, the slack prevents the second fixed part 11 from having “an unimpeded line of sight to at least a portion of the movable part.” Accordingly, Takahashi fails to teach or suggest at least the above-italicized limitations of claim 1. Moreover, Horiuchi fails to cure this deficiency of Takahashi.

In light of the foregoing, it is clear that Takahashi and Horiuchi (standing alone or combined) fail to teach or suggest at least the above-italicized limitations of claim 1. Accordingly, Takahashi and Horiuchi can not be used to reject claim 1, or any claim

dependent thereon, under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(b), 103(a). Moreover, as claims 2-4 and 8-11 depend from claim 1, each of these dependent claims is also allowable over Takahashi and Horiuchi, without regard to the other patentable limitations recited therein. Therefore, a withdrawal of the various rejections of claims 1-4 and 8-11 under §§ 102(b), 103(a) is both warranted and respectfully requested.

3. New Claims 15-22

New claim 15 depends from claim 1 and is, therefore, allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 1 and without regard to the other patentable limitations recited therein.

New claim 16 (*i.e.*, the claim from which claims 17-22 depend) recites a harness slack take-up structure that includes, among other possible things (*italic emphasis added*):

- a harness;
- a steering shaft that is configured to engage a steering wheel;
- a steering column that is configured to rotatably accommodate the steering shaft and that is configured to slide together with the steering shaft in a front/rear direction, *wherein the harness extends along the steering column and has a substantially round cross-section*, and wherein a slack of the harness has a first end and a second end;
- a slack holder configured to contain the slack of the harness;
- a movable part that is: (a) movable in the slack holder; and (b) configured to slide with the steering column in the front-rear direction; and
- a fixed part fixed to the slack holder,
 - wherein the first end of the slack engages a member of the movable part and the second end of the slack engages the fixed part, and
 - wherein the fixed part and the member of the movable part continuously have the slack of the harness therebetween when the movable part moves between an extreme frontward position and an extreme rearward position.

As above-italicized, claim 16 recites that the cross-section of the harness is substantially circular. In contrast to the substantially circular limitation, both Takahashi and Horiuchi teach flat cables of the type discussed in the Background of the instant application. *See* p. 1, lines 15-16 (numbered lines 16-17). As a result, Takahashi and Horiuchi can not be used to reject claim 16, or any claim dependent thereon, under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(b), 103(a). Moreover, as claims 17-22 depend from claim 16, each of these dependent claims is also allowable over Takahashi and Horiuchi, without regard to the other patentable limitations recited therein.

4. Previously Withdrawn Claims 6, 7, 13, and 14

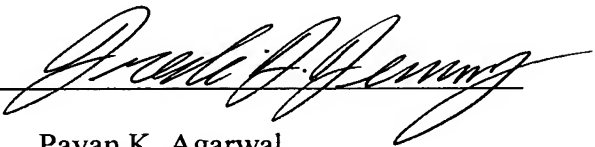
As withdrawn claims 6, 7, 13, and 14 depend from allowable claim 1, each of these dependent/withdrawn claims is also allowable. Accordingly, when issuing a Notice of Allowance, the Examiner is requested, under 37 C.F.R. § 1.141 and M.P.E.P. § 809.04, to reenter and allow claims 6, 7, 13, and 14.

CONCLUSION

For the aforementioned reasons, claims 1-4, 8-11, and 15-22 are now in condition for allowance. A Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned if such communication would expedite the prosecution of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

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